

# E-Book Task Force Tip Sheets

## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT FOR E-BOOKS

June 2011

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### THE SITUATION

E-books have been with us for a while. After all, NetLibrary began offering titles to libraries in the late 1990s, and the weighty Rocket e-Book device was available to the mass market at about the same time. Mass-market content has also been available for quite some time, with sites like Project Gutenberg and Google Books generally offering titles that are free of copyright restrictions (and free to download). Preferred electronic reading devices have come and gone since that time as well, from PDAs (personal digital assistant) to laptops. As more academic journal content moved online through library databases and e-books started to make appearances, the advent of smartphones set the stage for portability of all sorts of content. In general, however, the reader and library communities alike were floating in the calm serenity of a pretty uneventful market until 2007, when Amazon and Sony – soon to be followed by Barnes & Noble – announced e-readers and e-books that were designed specifically with the mass market in mind. Suddenly library users – and consequently libraries – were in the mix. Early adopters of the technologies that seemingly could not stay on the retail shelf began to seek content beyond

what they could buy through the online stores. Many library users sought the opportunity to give the technology itself a try, without first parting with the \$250 - \$500 that was required to invest in it. Unexpectedly, librarians, who may have been experimenting with e-book services, found themselves scrambling to offer full-blown programs for content and devices that would satisfy their users' needs while still adhering to collections budgets and programs. Looking to the future, it is important for us to find sustainable collections models that will work for our libraries and their users. The goal of this tipsheet is to provide guidance in the process of doing just that.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Though it may be tempting simply to purchase e-readers for lending and an e-books subscription from a vendor right away, it is important to first consider the reasons for doing so. Given that library collections budgets are typically stretched, purchasing the content or devices that are the best fit for your library is critical. Before making any decisions about content or device purchases, it is useful to consider the following questions. This is not meant to hold up the process, nor does it call

for a full-blown research survey (that comes later under assessment). Rather, taking a few moments to reflect on these questions can help to avoid making purchases that are not as useful as they could be, or that are downright regrettable.

### ***How much can we spend?***

This may seem like a no-brainer; e-books should be a line item in the library collections budget. Even in the experimental phases of offering e-book services, clearly allocate a defined dollar amount to the project. Doing so will keep the project in check and give collections managers a baseline to use when making future decisions. As budgets become tighter everywhere, it is extremely important to clearly document how money is spent and what proportion of the budget is going towards electronic content versus traditional print collections.

### ***What technologies are my library's users carrying around with them?***

Libraries must offer services and collections that are relevant to their users. In light of that, knowing what devices library users are carrying with them can inform the decisions about what types of content and/or devices to invest in. For instance, the initial reaction to the release of a particular e-reader device might be to purchase several to lend out; however, if most of the library's users already have one of these devices, money would be better spent on content that works on these devices. At the other end of the spectrum, many libraries serve populations who don't have access to technology or tend to be late-adopters. In that scenario, the library's money might be better spent on some devices to lend, so that library users can experiment with a variety of available technology. In the beginning of an e-books

program, use of simple observation and anecdotal evidence is likely to inform content and device purchase decisions. However, in the longer term, it may be useful to carry out a more formal survey of library users to determine what their technology and content needs really are.

### ***What do my library's users want to do with their e-content/devices?***

The usefulness of what the library purchases will vary depending on what the library's users actually want to be able to do with the content or devices that are offered. When making decisions about e-book services, it is important to reflect upon how those services will be used. Whether library users will be doing leisure reading or research will determine a number of decisions, from what vendor is chosen to what digital rights management (DRM) (see glossary) model is appropriate.

### ***Will we purchase e-books that duplicate what is in the print collection?***

The answer to this question may change as a library's e-book program develops and budgets change, but is essential to budget planning as well as the collection development process. In answering this question, assess the reasons for offering an e-book program. Is the purpose to avoid duplication of materials in a multi-library system? Is this simply an additional service that might be offered, sometimes in duplication of, the library's current collections offerings? Will a large portion of library users be left behind the collection offers only the e-book version of a title? Does the library serve a sizable population who will not or cannot use e-books, whether due to personal choice, budget, or physical limitation? It is important to clearly document and communicate whatever the answer to this

question is with all collections librarians involved in the program. Library users may also be curious about the library's stance on this issue, as, no matter what the library setting, there will always be library users who prefer one medium over another.

## **THE LAY OF THE LAND – WHAT'S AVAILABLE?**

### ***Device capabilities and restrictions***

When selecting a device to lend, it is important to understand both the capabilities and the restrictions that come along with the selected e-reader. Many e-readers now support the .epub file format (see glossary), which is taking hold as the universal e-book format; however, there are still some on the market that do not. In the same vein, take into consideration the specific file formats offered by any of the e-book vendors and whether those files can be used on the devices the library will be lending.

Enhanced functionality of devices can enhance the readers' experience. From highlighting capability to apps for activities other than reading, the suite of activities supported by reading devices continues to expand. In making a selection, consider how library users will want to interact with the devices and texts they borrow.

Other attributes to ponder are e-ink (see glossary) versus backlit screens, color versus black-and-white display, and wireless versus tethered content loading models.

### ***Content Models***

At the heart of the e-book issues are digital rights management (DRM) and purchasing models. DRM for content can be set by the e-book vendor, author, or publisher. DRM determines what a user can do with content

and how many users can take advantage of content. Purchasing models determine how much and when the library pays for the e-book content. Purchasing models also vary by vendor. Some require multiple purchases of one e-book and others permit library users to drive purchasing. While no two e-book contracts will look alike, here are some important concepts to know and ask about when shopping for an e-book provider.

### **User model –**

- Can the e-books be used by a single user at a time, multiple users, or unlimited users?
- Can that use be simultaneous?
- Can the user download the e-book for use from any location or must the user be in the library?
- Is the e-book dependent on a web-based interface?
- Does the content expire after a certain period of time? Who determines this expiration period?
- What devices or programs support the e-books' format, or are the e-books DRM-free?

### **Purchase model –**

- Are books purchased through firm orders of titles, by acquisition of large packages, or by patron-driven acquisition (PDA)?
- If PDA, what triggers the purchase of a book?
- Are the titles owned or leased by the library?
- Does the library have to purchase a second copy of the title – or pay for the first copy again – after a certain number of uses has been reached?

### Discoverability –

- How will library users find the e-books once you have purchased them?
- Are MARC records available for download?

### ASSESSMENT

Ongoing assessment is essential to any successful e-books program. In addition to assessing user demand and potential uses for content, libraries should take a look at actual results. Using statistics for both e-books and corresponding print copies (if applicable) can provide insight into actual demand for e-books, as well as budgetary implications of offering the e-book instead of or in addition to print versions of titles. In addition, if a library offers multiple e-book products, it is useful to gather comparable use statistics from one product to another, as well as user feedback regarding those products.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne Behler is an Information Literacy Librarian at the Penn State University Libraries, focused on instruction and outreach to first year students. She is also the librarian for the Penn State University Park leisure reading collection, and was the co-project leader for the Penn State Sony Reader pilot project. Her research interests include literacy among higher education students and outreach and marketing to first year students. This fall, you can follow her work as the embedded librarian for [Lector](#), a virtual book discussion community created and driven by undergraduate students who participated in the e-reader project. Anne is a member of the OITP E-book task force.

### FOR FURTHER READING

#### No Shelf Required (blog) -

<http://www.libraries.wright.edu/noshelfrequired>

#### No Shelf Required (book) -

<http://www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=2902> Perpetual Beta -  
<http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/category/tags/ebooks>

#### ALA TechSource -

<http://www.alatechsource.org/>

### GLOSSARY/IMPORTANT TERMS

#### *Technical Terms*

**DRM** – digital rights management. DRM are access technologies employed by vendors, publishers, or rights holders that control what you can do with an e-book title. It dictates how the title can be used (Does the file expire after a set time period?) and whether it must be read on specific e-reader devices. If an e-book has a different DRM scheme from an e-reader device, then it cannot be read on that device.

**E-ink** – e-ink is the technology behind many e-reader displays that enable them to mimic the experience of reading a book. Screens are not backlit and are fairly glare-free, since they reflect, rather than emit, light. (see <http://www.eink.com/index.html>)

**EPUB file format** – Electronic publication file format. The EPUB format allows content to be reformatted and optimized to be viewed on portable devices.

## ***Acquisitions Models***

**PDA/DDA** – Patron driven, or demand driven, acquisition - The library does not purchase a title until a library patron has viewed or used it. Agreement with the vendor should specify how many uses of an item will trigger a purchase. Libraries also have the option to review every purchase before it goes through, or can set a price above which all purchases will be approved. The library may be charged a rental fee for each use prior to purchase of the title.

**Subject-based packages** – The content in these packages is generally subject based or represents all titles published by that imprint in a given year. Content and contract comes directly from the publisher and is generally acquired at a discount over individual title-by-title selection for the titles in the package. The library typically owns content purchased through these agreements. (examples: Elsevier, Springer, Wiley)

**Aggregated packages** – Subject-based packages in which the content provided is based upon agreements between various publishers and the aggregator. Content is offered at a discount over ordering print and is typically leased in this model. Content is not necessarily stable – availability of titles may change as agreements between the aggregator and publishers change. (examples: NetLibrary, Safari)

**Title-by-title ordering** – Content is selected and purchased on a title-by-title basis and is typically full list price or more for each item. Content is typically owned by the library, with a license agreement articulating the terms of use and archival access, and can often be managed through approval plan ordering. (examples: ebrary, EBL, and netLibrary titles purchased through Yankee Book Peddler; OverDrive)

## ***Access Models***

**Leased content** – Content for which the library must pay an annual subscription fee or access is lost.

**Owned content** – Content for which the library pays a one-time fee and has access in perpetuity, with a license agreement articulating the terms of use and archival access. (Note: there may be an annual platform fee in order to get full functionality that the platform has to offer.)

**Non-linear use** – Currently only offered by EBL. This is the model offered in place of one single user at a time. Any library that contracts for this type of service is given 325 "loans" per copy of any given title. A loan is defined as a period longer than 10 minutes and less than 24 hours. Multiple people can use the book at the same time. When the book copy hits 325 uses, access to the book is revoked, or the library can choose to purchase a second copy, again with a 325 loan limit. Price for the book is 100 percent of hardcover.

**Simultaneous, or concurrent, users** – The number of users who may use an item at the same time.

**Single user model** – Only one user may “check out” and use a title at a time. In this scenario, the user’s access to that title will expire after a specified length of time.



**E-Books at a University Library: An interview with Lindsey Schell, Librarian, Research Services Division of the University of Texas Libraries**

**What is the library's budget for e-books?**

We have currently allocated approximately 25 percent of our total monographs budget for ebooks. We acquire e-books through multiple acquisitions streams including EBL, Ebrary and NetLibrary, as well as other vendors. A good portion of the e-book allocations are funneled towards patron-driven initiatives.

**How do you determine your allocation for e-books and how does it relate to the print budget?**

We started the EBL patron driven program in 2007 using 10 percent of our monograph budget – we thought this number was enough to really get a feel for the possibilities of the new business model but also provided a limited enough risk exposure if it didn't work. The pilot was wildly successful and we've just grown the budget for it each year.

**Do you duplicate between the print and e-collections?**

We actively reduce duplication exposure by populating our various patron driven plans with different publishers, but some duplication is more or less inevitable when you're operating an e-book program with multiple vendors and 40 subject specialists also selecting print materials. We don't dictate to our subject specialists any rules about duplication – if they

wish to have a book in both formats that is their choice. Also, if patrons request a book in a different format than the one we already have, we will gladly supply that for them – every patron has a personal preference for print or electronic and it is just good customer service to provide the format they request. Librarians always think patrons will be clamoring for a print copy when the e-book is available, but this is really just a librarian prejudice. We get just as many requests for e-book copies when the print is available.

**How have your library users received the e-book collections and how has that driven decisions?**

E-book use has always been higher than print circulation on a book by book comparison. We've run countless statistics on whether patrons chose an e-book when a print copy is also available, statistics on e-book usage by publisher, publication date, LC class, etc. You can look at it from 100 different angles and the value of an e-book is nearly always a better deal than its print counterpart.

**Do you lend e-reader devices?**

No. It's not a scalable service on a campus of 50,000 students. Maintaining hardware in proper working order is an expensive proposition and with so many users we couldn't possibly meet demand or satisfy such disparate preferences for make/model.

**Is there a resource you would point people to for more information about your library's efforts?**

The following pieces discuss in more depth the UT experience with e-books:

"The Academic E-book" in *No Shelf Required: eBooks in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Sue Polanka, American Library Association, 2010.

“Patron-driven, Librarian-approved: a pay-per-view model for e-books” in *Serials: the journal for the international serials community*, 22(3), 2009 Special issue: E-books, p.S31-8.



**E-books in a Public Library: An Interview with Pat Griffith, Head of Adult Services at Schlow Centre Region Library, State College Pennsylvania**

**How did your e-book program get started?**

E-books have been around for a long time but didn't take off with public library users until there were bestselling titles on convenient, portable and affordable devices.

We were able to get the funds to start up an e-book lending system because all of our district libraries agreed to support it with district money - it is a district-wide service. Initially, we were shopping for an Audiobooks provider. NetLibrary and Recorded Books were under consideration, but their partnership dissolved. We ended up selecting Overdrive because of the ability to add on an e-books service in the future; we decided to do so once Overdrive began offering content in the accessible epub file format. We also receive excellent support from our library friends program, and they have provided funds to increase the size of the e-book collection.

**What is the library's budget for e-books? How do you arrive at it, and how does it relate to the print budget?**

Our budget for e-books is part of the print book budget for the library. This was a deliberate decision, because e-book purchases are carried out in response to our collection development policy, which indicates that the library purchase an additional copy of a book for every three reserves on that title. Following this model, I purchase e-books as one of the extra copies of popular materials in our collection. Once purchased, the entire district has access to that electronic title in Overdrive, just as they would to our print collections through the catalog.

We are also watching e-book circulation closely to determine when we might need to change the ratio of e-copies to print copies. In response to demand, we have increased our expenditures on e-books by about 12 percent this year. This is not in line with the increased popularity of the service but in line with our budget. We are basing print vs. e-book decisions on patron demand because that is the only way we can justify the expenditures, as well as use the service as a fundraising focus.

**Do you duplicate between the print and e-collections?**

We duplicate because there is still high demand for print titles. In addition, we do not have the funds to entirely duplicate our print collection. Last year (2010), 16 percent of purchased titles were e-books. So far in 2011, 22 percent are e-books. That ratio is expected to continue to grow as demand for e-books increases. Since last year, the circulation of e-books has increased about 100 percent.

**How have your library users received the e-book collections and how has that driven decisions?**

E-book lending has been the most exciting service the library has ever added (at least in my 25 years at Schlow - videos may have caused the same stir before my time). The patrons love that they can get some free titles for their devices. Many patrons have chosen a nook over the Kindle because of its compatibility with library books (Kindle should be compatible with Overdrive by the end of 2011 – which also shows the power of offering the library books). More patrons attend the library's e-book classes than any other class I have ever offered. They call us, send support questions, bring their devices in. It has really changed the way they think of the library. Right now, the fact that Kindles will soon be compatible with Overdrive is making us look for additional funding to purchase more titles to try to meet the demand.

**Do you lend e-reader devices?**

We do not at this time. We have devices for patrons to try out at the library. We do have a grant to try interlibrary loan with devices (we haven't decided which one) - preloading the device and lending it. Within that grant, we may try other lending models as well. This is a beta test grant to see how it will work for us. We are concerned about loss, but as the cost for devices comes down, this becomes less of a concern.

**Are there any libraries you would point to as a flagship library when it comes to e-book services?**

I would mention the Free Library of Philadelphia. They are permitting any resident of Pennsylvania to apply online for a Philadelphia library card, which then enables the patron to access their e-book collection, as well as all of their databases.

**Is there a resource you would point people to for more information about your library's efforts?**

People can send any questions regarding e-book services or support to [pgriff@schlowlibrary.org](mailto:pgriff@schlowlibrary.org). In addition, the Schlow Centre Region Library's Overdrive catalog is browseable by visiting [schlowlibrary.org](http://schlowlibrary.org) and selecting the Online Resources link.

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